

TABLE TALK

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE for July 24-July 30, 2022

WEEKLY READINGS: Acts 9; Acts 8:9-24; Acts 19:18-20; Romans 8:5-11; 12:2; I John 5:12; II Timothy 3:1-9

ACTS IN 30 Week 9: *Saul-Paul: A Spirit Transformed Life*

"The Spirit as an experienced and empowering reality was for Paul and his churches the key player in all of Christian life, from beginning to end. The Spirit covered the whole waterfront: power for life, growth, fruit, gifts, prayer, witness, and everything else. If the church is going to be effective in our postmodern world, we need to stop paying mere lip service to the Spirit and recapture Paul's perspective: the Spirit as the experienced, empowering return of God's own personal presence in and among us, who enables us to live as a radically eschatological people in the present world while we await the consummation. All the rest, including fruit and gifts (that is, ethical life and charismatic utterances in worship), serve to that end." – Gordon Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God*

FOCUS: READ Acts 9:1-31 **The Spirit-Led Transformation of "Saul the Persecutor" to "Paul the Apostle"**

"Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. And the voice replied, "I am Jesus, the One you are persecuting!" (Acts 9:5, NLT)

BIG IDEA 1 – The man we refer to today as, "The Apostle Paul" first met Jesus while he was on his way to persecute Christians who were followers of Jesus (NOTE: "Saul" was his birthname, but he was also known as "Paul" (Acts 13:9) because having dual names was a common practice in his time). After encountering Jesus, Paul **confessed** that Jesus was Lord (Acts 9:5), was **baptized** (vs.18), and began **witnessing** to others about his transformation (Acts 9:20). Although the Apostles in Jerusalem didn't accept him at first, (vs.26), **the fruit of his life demonstrated** to them over time that he truly was a born-again believer (Galatians 1:11-2:1). Paul went from persecuting the Church to becoming its greatest advocate!

Q1- What are some things that stand out to you about Paul's transformation? How does the Holy Spirit transform us today?

FOCUS: Acts 8:9-24 **The Sad State of Simon the Sorcerer: An Untransformed Life**

"Even Simon himself became a believer and after his baptism attached himself closely to Philip. As he saw the signs and remarkable demonstrations of power which took place, he lived in a state of constant wonder." (Acts 8:13, Phillips)

BIG IDEA 2 – In the previous chapter, we read the story of a prominent and powerful magician – Simon – who was led to Jesus by Philip. Amazed by the power of the Holy Spirit in Philip's ministry, Simon became a believer and was water baptized (vs. 13). However, when Peter and John came teaching people about the transformational power of the **baptism of the Holy Spirit**, Simon demonstrated signs that his life was **not truly transformed**. He offered Peter money to "buy" the power of the Holy Spirit (vs. 19) so that he could presumably increase his own power and prominence with the people. Peter rebukes him (vs. 21) and excludes him from ministry there unless he fully repented (vs. 24). Whenever the power of God is at work, there will be **genuine transformations and counterfeit imitations**. Jesus said we must judge a tree by its fruit (Matt. 7:16), and the Bible warns that in the last days, people may look religious but deny the transformational power of the Spirit (II Tim. 3:1-9)

Q2- Compare the transformed life that Paul demonstrated after he encountered Jesus and the untransformed life of Simon.

What are some similarities/what are some differences? Why is important that we look at the "fruit" and not just the "tree?"

FOCUS: Romans 8:5-11 **The Fruit of a Spirit-Transformed Life is "Life & Peace" (Chayim & Shalom)**

"A mind focused on the flesh is doomed to death, but a mind focused on the Spirit will find full life and complete peace." (Romans 8:6, The Voice)

BIG IDEA 3 – At St. Johns, we believe a **disciple is a fully-devoted follower of Jesus who – through the power of the Holy Spirit – demonstrates loyalty to Him in every area of life**. Once we have received Jesus as **Savior**, we need the power of the Holy Spirit to obey Him in our everyday lives as our **Lord**. In Romans 8, the Apostle Paul compares/contrasts what life in the Spirit looks like versus a life lived "in the flesh" (vs. 5). A life transformed by the Spirit means that we **think** differently (Romans 12:2), **talk** differently (Ephesians 4:29), and **act** differently than those whose lives are dominated by the world and the flesh (see Galatians 5:16-25). The Bible promises that as we seek to live life governed by the Holy Spirit we will experience **real life and true peace** – shalom wholeness for ourselves and for those around us (Rom. 8:6).

Q3 – As a believer in Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit! What are some ways that we can practically become transformed by the Holy Spirit in our everyday lives?